



# Historical Society of Decatur County

## The Bulletin

Vol. 16 No. 1

Spring 2011

Greensburg, Indiana

*"Courage was mine, and I  
had mystery,*

*Wisdom was mine, and I had  
mastery:*

*To miss the march of this  
retreating world Into  
vain citadels that are not  
walled."*

*-Wilfred Owen  
(1893-1918)*



Joe Welch in his WWI uniform

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### Editor's Note:

The following poem was written by Joseph B. Keene, a veteran of World War I, who served in the U.S. Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Indian Head) Division. Mr. Keene saw significant action in General Pershing's A.E.F. during the summer of 1918. Two battles, Chateau-Thierry, and Belleau-Wood, are particularly recalled because of the use of mustard gas (phosgene) by the German forces. Recounting his experiences during a prolonged forty-day segment of these battles without relief, Mr. Keene describes the difficult, yet vital, struggle with his gas mask. This protective gear was cumbersome and constrictive, and on too many occasions the soldiers, out of desperation, simply tore them off...and took their chances with the gas. Mr. Keene, out of respect for later veterans of later wars, would make it a point to welcome home those young men and women from the Napoleon, Indiana, area who served our nation during the Second World War and Korea.

As your editor read Mr. Keene's poem, he recalled the words of British writer and soldier, Wilfred Owen, in his poem, Dulce Et Decorum Est. The epigraph on page 1 is from another war poem by Owen titled Strange Meeting. Could the poet, who lost his life in battle one week before World War I ended, be characterizing our times today?

### AT LAST

When at last world's peace is sounded  
And we finish all this grind-  
When we start upon the homeward trip  
To the girls we left behind-  
When we turn in all our ordnance  
And barrack bags so full;  
Sacrifice the month rotation  
Of good old Army "bull"-  
When we sing our last together  
And start out for the West-  
When we do our last fatigue work

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

And leave the squadron pest-  
When the time has come and it's over-  
No more traveling to be done  
And the Government has called in our haversacks and-  
Won't we miss the Army routine?  
Won't we miss the good old bunch?  
I'm thinking, well, backward;  
We'll be longing for the good old  
Times the boys had overseas,  
Traveling in box cars and sleeping on our knees.  
Yes, even cooties chasing  
And sleeping in the tents,  
And crapping by sevens for our last fifty cents.  
The traveling that we've done  
With the poor old squadron nut,  
Is much more than we'll ever do  
In the home civilian rut.  
But experience has taught us that  
Adventures, great or small,  
Will come if they are destined,  
Or they'll never come at all;  
And if we've another war, the  
Good old bunch we've got  
Will join up in a body and be  
"Johnny on the spot."

- Joseph B. Keene, Co. D., 23 d Inf., A.E.F.

### Editor's Note

*The accompanying reminiscence, My Home Town: Letts, Indiana, 1916-1938 was written by Neal McCammon who, along with brother, Leon, are sons of the late John McCammon. The portion of the document in the Museum's possession, and presented here, is the third part of chapter one; the first part of chapter one was published in the fall 2010 issue of The Bulletin. As you read the excerpt, you will see the author has scripted a fond recollection of Letts, and the descriptions are singularly detailed. Accompanying the narrative is an index which refers to two "diagrams" of the community as well as several photographs. There are additional chapters in the author's possession, and the Society hopes to publish these in The Bulletin as they become available. The editor believes you will enjoy reading My Home Town: Letts, Indiana, 1916-1938.*

## *I Remember Part III*

### MY HOME TOWN

### LETTS, INDIANA

1916-1938

The Pat Parker blacksmith shop (21) was a business started by Pat in the late eighteen nineties and early nineteen hundreds and was operated until the early nineteen forties. Pat was a typical "smithy", wearing an old felt hat and a leather apron. There was the old felt hat and a leather apron. There was the old forge with the original hand bellows but later changed to bellows with a crank that forced air into the forge and kept the fire hot in the wagon days of wire rims loosening and/or coming off, Pat would build a fire in front of the shop and heat the rims which would be put back on the wheel and cooled rapidly in a tank of water causing the rim to shrink and again fit the wheel tightly.

Plowing was done with plow shares attached to all kinds of plows. During the plowing season, it would take nearly all of Pat's day to keep up with the need for sharpened shares that became dull by striking rocks in the ground. The pile of shares on the floor was marked with the owners name in white chalk. The shares were held by tongs and heated in the forge until almost white hot and then placed on the anvil which was mounted on a circular block of wood which made it the right height. The share was placed on the anvil and pounded with a heavy hammer on the edge that needed sharpening. As soon as the edge was sharp enough, it was plunged into a tub of hot water next to the anvil in order to temper the steel and make it harder for the rocks to dull it.

By the late nineteen twenties the hardware store had closed, so Pat had a room in the back of the barn (this barn had been converted from the livery stable of earlier years) where he kept hardware and fishing and hunting equipment. Pat was an avid fisherman and would grab every opportunity to sneak away to the creek or pond. He was adept at fly fishing and could catch fish when there weren't any fish there! Pat did not have a car for transportation so he would call and say, "Do you want to go in the morning at 5:00AM?" If your answer was yes, that was the end of the conversation as he was a man of few words. When you drove up to his kitchen door at 5:00AM he would come out with his hip boots on and his gear in hand. He would put the gear in the back seat, crawl into the front seat and say, "Good Morning." You would say, "Where to?" He would say Clifty, Flat Rock, Sandcreek or one of the ponds and that might be the end of the conversation until you arrived back home. Almost everyone was pleased when Pat called for a fishing trip.

In the loft of his barn was a croquet court with wooden bank boards on all sides. The wickets were fixed in the floor, which was covered with a thin layer of sawdust. When electricity came along the court was lighted but before that you hoped there were no clouds to shut out the sunlight. This was a well used and an enjoyable area for a small town.



*(Continued from page 3)*

The north side of the shop of the shop was used by Jim Parker (Pat's son) after he left Welch's garage and before he moved to Greensburg. He did everything from appliance repair to auto repair. He provided an indispensable service to the community when travel to a larger town was difficult. Jim would leave his tools helter-skelter in the shop but if you would pick one up to place it on the bench, he would holler, "Don't move my tools as I know exactly where I left them." Pat had spent much of his life collecting Indian relics that he found in the area and he had one room in his house filled with cases of unusual relics.

The Methodist Church (11) was built in the very late eighteen nineties by U.S. Parker and his brother, Marshall Parker. Their father and grandfather were master carpenters and passed their trade along to their sons. They were very particular and precise in their building. During their construction days they would steam and form wood for circular staircases. The church edifice was of wood construction and always painted white. The pews were in three sections; left, right, and middle with aisles in between. Sunday school rooms were in the back of the sanctuary. The sanctuary could seat about one hundred people. The Epworth League was the young peoples' group and most of the kids would go to the meetings for something to do and to see their boyfriends or girlfriends. Even the Baptists would go. You can see from the map that the Methodist and Baptist churches were at opposite ends of the town!

Slaughter House (8) Mahan Johnson was a carpenter by trade but would operate the slaughter house, especially in the late summer and early fall. He would slaughter and process both the beef and the pork. There was a big demand for this business because this was the only place for miles around where this service could be found. Remember, many of these years were depression years and people had to provide their own food by raising cows, hogs, chickens, and vegetables for preserving and canning. There was no refrigeration so most foods were smoked or canned. The weather was so much different in those years that you could hang up a quarter of beef in a screened area around Thanksgiving and it would keep until March. The frozen meat would then be cut or sawed as needed. Snow would remain on the ground from mid November until spring. There were times when you could walk over fence tops as the snow was that deep.

The school (76). This was a two story brick building built in the eighteen nineties and housed grades one through twelve. In 1922 there were two hundred fifty six students. Grades one through eight met in four classrooms on the first floor and grades nine through twelve in the rooms on the second floor. There was a gymnasium/auditorium on the second floor which was very small and the ceiling only about eight or nine feet above the basketball rim. The crowd would have to stand "one deep" around the sidelines or in doorways. Playing here was discontinued after the 1926 season. Thereafter, until Letts and Westport consolidated and became Sandcreek, the Letts High School Bearcats played their "home" games in the Greensburg Armory or mostly in the Westport Community gym. The team would get one practice night a week. Any other practice was by the side of someone's barn or on a dirt court outside on the playground. The games were played on Friday or Saturday nights. In the early years, students walked, rode a horse or rode in a horse drawn buggy to school. Then someone came up with a horse drawn "hack" that could haul about a dozen students. There were three of those used at Letts. Then came the "modern" bus attached to a Model A chassis. These buses were the first ones to have heaters in them. In the early nineteen forties we began to see a gradual improvement in the buses providing greater comfort and larger capacity.

The auditorium was used for school functions such as operettas and school plays. U.S. Parker had designed a folding stage for one end of the room and this stage which was split in the middle, then connected with hinges would allow each end to fold up against the wall on each side of the room. When the school plays were held mostly on Friday and Saturday nights, a seating chart would be made out with little boxes representing seats. The chart would be put on a showcase in Bert McCammon's store and when tickets were sold the name of the buyer would be written in the box. Each "student actor" would check frequently to see how sales were going and who would be sitting in which seat. The performances were nearly always sold out

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

as there were so few things to do during the depression years in a small town. With tickets selling for twenty cents each and with a capacity crowd of one hundred, the profit would total \$40.00. The proceeds paid for the right to use the play and leave a little left over for the class treasury. Candy sales at noon and at recess provided the rest of the money for the treasury. The junior class always had the rights for the candy sales. The auditorium old gym was used for an assembly room for all high school students. The desks were fastened to wooden runners with four or five in a group. When any function was held here the groups of seats could be easily moved out of the room and stored. The high school enrollment was between sixty and seventy with an average graduating class of twelve. The freshman class was always seated on the east side and each year would move one section to the west.

Some of the remembered school principals were: J.R. Crawley, Floyd Wheeler, Robert Gossett and Alfred (Stubby) Woods. High school teachers included: Vernal Klipse, Geneva Risk, and Martha (Harding) Webb. Teacher/coaches included: Raymond Hern, Lawrence Pearl, and Malcolm (Mud) Clay. Elementary teachers included: Laura Hodson, Ruby Thurston, Winifred Armstrong, Zula Emly, Mary Crise, Minnie Wheeler, Earl

Rawlins, Ira Edwards and Thomas Utter. Earl Rawlins also coached high school basketball and baseball.

Charles Bridges was the janitor from 1910 until at least 1934. He lived across the street and kept the entire building clean and warm. He was a white-haired and kindly person whom all of the students liked and respected. The building was heated by a hand fed furnace and later by a stoker fed furnace that generated steam for the old fashioned ribbed radiators.

The school well furnished all of the water for the school furnace and for the students. This well had a proverbial tin cup hanging on a wire hook. Many of the students owned the telescoping tin cup that when closed could be carried in their pocket. Nearly all of the students learned to take their note paper and fold it into a drinking cup. At the end of the day there would be a bucket full of used paper cups. The "old cupped left hand" was often used also.

Baseball diamond (78). Baseball season was in the spring and games were played afterschool. If you played on the baseball team you anxiously waited out the day and watched the weather. In baseball, as well as in basketball, the chief rivals were Jackson Township and Westport. Due to the closeness of the schools there were school and personal rivalries often caused by boys dating girls from the other school. You don't come to our town and steal our girls!

Outdoor toilet facilities (75) (77). These were oversized versions of the residence out-houses. You can believe that in the dead of winter, with a blizzard howling outdoors, that there was no abuse of two fingered excuses to go to the toilet. Smoking and loitering in the "rest room" was non-existent.

Sawmill (82). Operated from 1900 to 1925.

Frank Hare's filling station and restaurant. (93) When automobiles became more prevalent in the late twenties and early thirties. State Road 3 was rebuilt and updated, therefore keeping the filling stations flourishing. This station sold Mobil Gas and had a nice restaurant with a lunch counter in one room and a dining room adjacent. Bertha Hare was a very good cook and was well known for her fish sandwiches. She had a recipe that she wouldn't give to anyone.

(Continued on page 6)



This was a successful business and served a great need for this small community.

They sponsored the softball team that played on the diamond across the street. This area later was used for the Pohlman Hardware and Implement Co.

Lucious Clemens filling station (68) was on the opposite corner and also served sandwiches. They served the usual candy, cigarettes and other sundries. This station had a pool table, so it attracted pool players and the usual number of evening loafers.

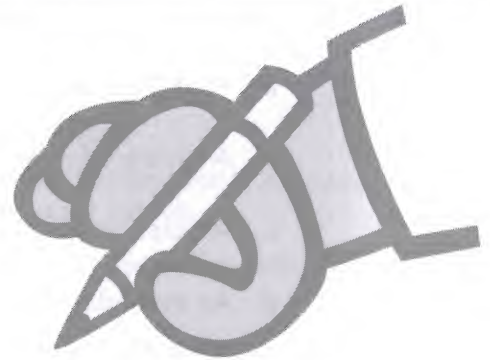
Church parsonage (104). This was used as a parsonage in later years. Prior to that time the Baptist parsonage was on the north side of Main Street, "uptown".

Baptist Church (103). Mount Aerie Cemetery (102). This church was built of brick prior to 1889. This sanctuary was in three sections and could seat about 125 people. There was a Sunday School room in the back of the sanctuary which had folding doors to open and provided more seating when needed. There were two classrooms behind the pulpit and one to the left of the sanctuary. The choir section was to the left of the pulpit. Cliff and Lib Davis and their family were gifted musicians and were instrumental in having a fine choir for many years. There was a baptismal tank under the pulpit and by removing the floor of the pulpit it was ready for baptism ceremony. However, in the summertime the baptisms were conducted in Cobbs Fork Creek. Some of the ministers who served this church were: C.B. Atkinson, Harley Albritton, Robert Marlett and C. McWilliams. One of the more memorable things done by the church was the participation of the Greensburg Fall Festival. U.S. Parker built a 6 X 8 foot little brown church with windows, doors, and steeple and large enough for six children to sit inside. This was mounted on the bed of a Model T truck and the choir on the truck singing hymns such as The Little Brown Church in the Vale. This was in the nineteen twenties. John McCammon was the Sunday School Superintendent and taught the young married couples class for twenty eight years.

After the new State Road 3 was built several people felt that the intersection of State Road 3 and State Road 46 would be a booming place. Elda Pavy, who was a successful farmer near Forest Hill, had accumulated some wealth. He had a grand scheme that he would start a new community. He obtained some leases on the land and secured some promises for additional preliminary work done by surveyors. This project was a matter of much conversation by local residents with varying opinions. This happened in the early thirties and ended in failure.

Joe Dance built a nice truck stop at the southeast corner of the intersection with a nice restaurant. This was in the middle to late forties. The traffic just did not materialize as the owners expected and the people from Greensburg did not go to this area. After a few brief years this business failed and the building was torn down. In the early fifties Carl Brown came to Greensburg as the plant manager at Bohn Aluminum and he and his wife, Faith, built a restaurant and added a few sleeping rooms thinking that truck drivers would use it. The building was never completed as it appeared it was a bad investment. This spot later became John's Truck Stop. Faith then opened a tree nursery called Concord Gardens.

Horace. On the northwest corner was a filling station, store and restaurant run by Earl Robbins and his wife Violet. Estel Gibson had a general merchandise store and also owned a building across the street that was a feed storage building used by the farmers in the area. The depot and stockyards were on the west side of the railroad tracks and across from the Gibson store. There was an agent at that site until the middle to late twenties. After that time any shipment to or from Horace had to be handled through the Letts depot.



### Items for the *Bulletin*

The Board of Directors and the editor of the Historical Society *Bulletin* welcome accounts of historical and genealogical interest for inclusion in all issues of your publication. Please send us a story, a family biographical account, a reminiscence, or a description of some item of historical significance. Pictures of "old-time" Decatur County and Greensburg are also encouraged. All pictures will be returned to you unless you give the Museum staff permission to keep them for the Museum archives. All items submitted for inclusion in the *Bulletin* will be credited.

### General Guidelines for Submission of Written Materials

1. Material which is composed using a keyboard should be double-spaced and referenced if the submission is derived from, or refers to, a published source. Don't worry about rules of documentation. Just tell us where the information came from, and we'll make note of it. Include your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. The editor will get in contact with you concerning when the submission will appear in the *Bulletin*. Submission of handwritten material is also accepted, but publication time may be extended since the material will have to be typed by *Bulletin* staff.
2. Items should reach the editor no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month precedent to the *Bulletin's* publication dates, which are projected to be the third week of **February, May, August, and November**.
3. Your material may be mailed to the Historical Society office or to the editor. If you prefer to e-mail the material, send it to the editor at gholt2\_2@msn.com. The editor will reply by e-mail. If there is no response, call 663-4798 or 663-9515.
4. Included in each issue of the *Bulletin* will be standard informative items such as the President's Letter, Museum Musings, and announcements pertaining to Historical Society activities. Your submission will, however, receive featured placement.
5. Material selected for publication will be edited only for standard English usage in respect to such items as spelling and punctuation. The editor knows from personal experience how easy it is to make these kinds of errors, and he believes members of the Society prefer a publication free of "creative" spelling, usage, and punctuation. However, no change will be made in the syntax of primary source material. An edited submission will be available for your inspection prior to its publication if you so indicate.

(Continued on pg. 8)

6. Suggested items for publication:

- a. Feature articles of 750-1000 words on an event, a personage, or a reminiscence
- b. A review of an article, book, or news item which will be of interest to Society members
- c. Articles on genealogy
- d. An extended series of articles such as Russell Wilhoit's descriptions of Decatur County communities
- e. Examples of life in "the good old days": pictures, prices, postcards, progress, etc.
- f. Any topic which has been personally or socially instrumental in putting the heart in the "Heartland"

"...history is an everlasting possession"-

Thucydides

\*\*\*\*\*  
Staff Changes

A Big THANK YOU!!

For the past seven years of its publication, the Historical Society *Bulletin* has owed its composition and artistic merit to Susan Ricke, who spent hundreds of hours preparing for publication the material I gave her. It didn't matter what form the articles, clippings, pictures, or other miscellanea I gave her were in, Susan found just the right place and format for them. On many occasions she suggested additions or deletions of material that I had failed to consider. Her ideas always worked! I have two reliable computer skills: I can get my laptop started after I find an electrical outlet for it, and I can get it stopped...usually when I want to, but not always. Anything in between is sheer guesswork, and I appreciate Susan's turning my guesswork into confidence.

Susan: thank you so very much! Your dependability and concern for the *Bulletin* as a publication that both Historical Society members and non-members looked forward to reading, made my work much easier and more enjoyable. All the best,

George

Welcome!

The Decatur County Historical Society welcomed a new staff member onto the team recently as Dustin White has taken the new position of Executive Director of the Historical Society. Dustin grew up in Decatur County and resides near St. Paul; he graduated from Purdue University with a degree in History in 2008. Dustin will be working to help promote and expand the efforts of the Historical Society as it continues to progress into the future. All members are encouraged to stop by and introduce themselves to Dustin.

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## Upcoming Museum Exhibits!

### Year Round

Come see a Victorian Era house built in 1856 equipped with all of the furnishings of the time period.

### February through March:

**Gallery** - Historical Documents, paintings, posters, photographs, tools, and textiles.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Toy Exhibit from the museum's collection of toys.

**Textile Room** - Costumes and Photographs from 1900 to 1920.

### April:

**Gallery** - Historical Documents, paintings, posters, photographs, tools, and textiles.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Centenary of the Indianapolis 500 *(from the collection of Dallas Whipple)*

**Textile Room** - Costumes and Photographs from 1900 to 1920.

### May:

**Gallery** - Garden exhibit including a special Luncheon in the gallery on May 14th *(limited seating available)*

**Upstairs East Hall** - Centenary of the Indianapolis 500 *(from the collection of Dallas Whipple)*

**Textile Room** - Church Materials, in conjunction with the Religious Handmade Art and Craft exhibit at the Christian Church, May 17-18, 2011.

### June:

**Gallery** - Garden exhibit until the transition to All-American Girls Professional baseball league exhibit.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Centenary of the Indianapolis 500 *(from the collection of Dallas Whipple)*

**Textile Room** - Church Materials, in conjunction with the Religious Handmade Art and Craft exhibit at the Christian Church, May 17-18, 2011.

### July:

**4th of July** - House will be decorated for the holiday and open to the public following the local parade.

**Gallery** - All-American Girls Professional Baseball League exhibit highlighting Janet Rumsey, a Decatur county native.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Center of Population exhibit *(120th anniversary)*

**Textile Room** - Textile Exhibit

### August:

**Gallery** - All-American Girls Professional Baseball League exhibit highlighting Janet Rumsey, a Decatur county native.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Center of Population exhibit *(120th anniversary)*

**Textile Room** - Textile Exhibit

**We hope you will stop by to see our exhibits!**

## Membership Form

Thank you for your support!

Membership rates are as follows:

Student	\$ 10.00 per year
Individual	\$ 15.00 per year
Family	\$ 25.00 per year
Patron	\$ 50.00 per year
Historian	\$100.00 per year
Lifetime	\$500.00 (one-time payment)

Circle type of membership at left.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Historical Society, P.O. Box 163, Greensburg, IN 47240 - Attn: Dues.

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Dustin White

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**"The Bulletin"**

**Society's Officers**

President: Jim Rosenberry  
Vice-President: Bryan Robbins  
Treasurer: Linda Volk  
Corresponding Secretary: Diana Springmier  
Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Bailey

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Ginny Garvey	Chris Harpring
Tom Hunter	Mike McCoy
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Russell Wilhoit	Dennis Wilson

**Society's Agent**

William H. Robbins

**Museum Director**

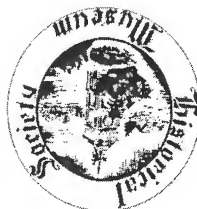
Diana Springmier

**Historical Society of Decatur County Museum**

Museum Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 to 2:00  
Saturday 10:00 to 2:00 and Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 - April  
thru December  
Museum phone/fax: 663-2764  
Email: dechissoc@etczone.net  
After hours call 663-2997 or 663-5141

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**Society est. 1957**  
**Museum est. 1984**



Historical Society of Decatur County  
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# Historical Society of Decatur County

## The Bulletin

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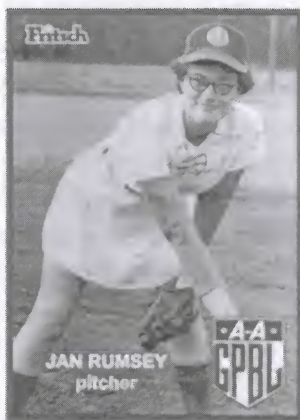
Fall 2011

Greensburg, Indiana

### The Trail

*Happily may I walk  
May it be beautiful before me.  
May it be beautiful behind me.  
May it be beautiful below me.  
May it be beautiful above me.  
May it be beautiful all around me.  
In beauty it is finished*

*Navaho Night Chant*



AAGPBL player and Decatur County Native Janet Rumsey. Janet Pitched for the South Bend Blue Sox (1951-1954)

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### "A League of their Own"

Dustin White

The All-American Girls Baseball League was formed in 1942 by Philip K. Wrigley of Wrigley Gum and Chicago Cubs fame. Wrigley feared that due to World War II he would soon find his ball park sitting empty with all of his players off fighting. An empty ballpark doesn't generate any revenue, so Wrigley formed a committee that proposed the idea of creating women's baseball league. Wrigley's committee originally pitched the idea to other major league owners, with the proposal that the women would play games on days that the men were not, doing so in order to maximize the use of their stadiums. However, this idea of a women's baseball league did not draw much interest from the other owners, and Wrigley was left to continue on his own selecting four cities without Major League baseball teams near Chicago to be the original host cities.

These original cities and teams were: Kenosha Comets, Racine Belles, Rockford Peaches, and the South Bend Blue Sox. Over the Leagues history it fielded as many as 10 teams for the 1948 season, though the league expanded and contracted often in its short history. Only two of the original four teams lasted long enough to play in all twelve seasons of the league - these teams were the Rockford Peaches and the South Bend Blue Sox. Even though all of the teams were located around the Great Lakes region, the players came from near and far. When the league was formed scouts were sent out to major softball leagues around the country and Canada, as well as having try-outs held in major cities around the United States. After this initial round of scouting, 280 girls were brought to a final try-out at Wrigley Field in Chicago where the top sixty were selected to be the first professional women baseball players. The initial season of league play featured players from twenty-six states and five Canadian provinces.

One of the major fears Mr. Wrigley had when forming the league was that the girls would come off as too masculine, making fans unable to embrace the players. To combat those image concerns, Wrigley sent players to "Charm School" to teach his players etiquette and guidelines to become a vision of feminine beauty on and off the field. The uniforms for the All-American Girls Baseball League were also designed to be very feminine and stylish, created by the team of Mrs. Wrigley, Otis Shepard who was the art designer for Wrigley's Gum, and Ann Harnett. Ann Harnett, a softball star from Chicago, was the first player signed to the league and became the model for the league's uniforms.

(Continued on page 2)



When the All-American Girls started playing baseball in 1943, the rules and strategy were a combination between the baseball played in men's professional leagues and softball. The major differences to be seen were: distances between the plate and pitching mound, distances between the bases, styles of pitching, and the size of the ball. Throughout the years these differences became less pronounced as the league continued to evolve to more closely resemble that of the Major League.

*A Shrinking Target:*

The size of the ball used by the league shrunk throughout the years. The All American Girls Professional Baseball League started out using a twelve inch circumference ball which was similar to the size of a softball and ended up using a nine inch circumference ball. This nine inch ball was the same size used by their male counterparts in the major leagues.

*Pitching Styles:*

When the girls took to the field in 1943, only underhanded pitching was permitted, in what was basically an early form of fast-pitch softball. As early as 1946 the league began allowing side armed pitching and in 1948 the rules allowed the girls to pitch overhand just like the men.

*Running the Bases and Moving the Mound:*

The distance between the bases grew from only sixty-five feet apart in 1943 until they were eighty-five feet in 1954; this was just five feet shy of the 90 foot distance used by the men. The gap between the pitcher's mound and home plate also grew during the leagues history, starting only forty feet away from the home plate and moving back several times until the girls were pitching sixty feet from the plate.

The All-American Girls baseball league ran until 1954, when dwindling attendance spelled the end for the league. With live broadcast of major league baseball games on television becoming more and more popular, fewer people came out to watch the girls play. The league had contracted back to only four teams in this last year with the Kalamazoo Lassies winning the final championship. However, the league lived on through its players' memories, hosting many reunions as well as being featured in the hit movie, "A League of their Own."

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League's Decatur County connection is Janet Rumsey, a pitcher for the South Bend Blue Sox from Burney. Janet played four years in the league (1951-54) and has the distinction of being named the pitching champ of 1954 as well as pitching the league's last no-hitter.

The Historical Society Museum invites you to come and check out our display of the league which includes: uniforms, a "Charm School" guidebook, scrapbooks, photographs as well as a large collection of items provided by Janet Rumsey's family. We will also be hosting a special event on September 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 at the historical society museum with a panel of former players and an umpire from the All-American Girls Baseball League.



## Rebekah Park Trail

George Granholt

For nearly thirty years, the Decatur County Parks and Recreation Board has maintained a small park area at the east end of Washington Street on land formally owned by the Indiana State Odd Fellows Home. The site, named after Rebekah in chapter 24 of Genesis and the I.O.O.F. auxiliary, features picnic tables, play-ground equipment, a large play area for ball games, a parking area, and restrooms. During a typical summer recreation season, the park serves as a quiet place to spend a few leisure hours. The park is seldom crowded, except on those infrequent times when some special event is being held. Now a new use for Rebekah Park will be available for those who wish to go hiking, or just desire to spend a couple of hours away from "civilization."

About four years ago, the Parks Department circulated a questionnaire asking county residents to make suggestions for additional recreational activities. One of the most frequent requests was for a hiking trail, and now that request has been fulfilled. Then county commissioner Charles Buell, now deceased, led an effort to acquire additional property where the I.O.O.F. orchard had been located. As you may know, the area across the road from Rebekah Park has been a tangled mass of trees, brush, and other dense overgrowth. However, over the last two years, the Parks Department staff, under the direction of Superintendent Robert Barker, has transformed the site into an inviting facility for picnicking and hiking. There are tables, benches, a one-mile trail along a creek, and an assortment of wildlife including fox, deer, raccoons, and other "critters." After the land was acquired by the Decatur County Council and the Decatur County Commissioners, work on the trail began, and the entire facility, from initial planning to its finish, has taken the better part of the last two years. Of significance to Decatur County taxpayers is the fact that the project has been completed by Parks Department personnel, with the assistance of the County Highway Department in solving some drainage problems, within the regular budget of the Parks Department.

This new and impressive facility is now ready for Decatur County residents to enjoy. It's here because of the vision of County Commissioner Charles Buell and the Decatur County Parks and Recreation Board, the hard work of Parks Department employees, and the persistence of Parks and Recreation Superintendent, Robert Barker. There will be a dedication ceremony on Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, at Rebekah Park at 10:00 A.M. Come out and be a part of this celebration.

~~~~~

## Dryden Park Update

George Granholt

Your editor recently talked to Fire Chief Scott Chastain about the status of Dryden Park and the monument dedicated to the opening of the Michigan Road. If you recall, the little park occupies a site on a triangular plot of ground just across from the Greensburg, Washington Township, fire station. Unfortunately, the park fell victim to an uninsured speeding motorist this past winter. Quite a bit of damage was done to the monument and, because of litigation, several months have passed with seemingly little effort being made to restore the site. Well, this is, happily, not the case. A committee made up of Chief Chastain, Brian Robbins, Greg and Judy Rust, County Highway Superintendent Mark Klosterkemper, et al?, with a donation from the local Rotary Club, is seeking a grant to restore the monument and the site. Updates will follow.



## Museum Musings

Diana Springmier

The late spring and summer of 2011 have welcomed all ages of visitors, along with their varied interests, to the Museum. This past spring's opening saw the gallery transformed into a garden, created by our talented Society member, Nancy Cuskaden. The garden was highlighted by Ginny Garvey's collection of many unique watering cans and by Marilyn Beaver's colorful bird houses. Many Society members and their friends attended a spring luncheon catered by Nancy.

School field trips brought students to the Museum, giving the young people a sense of 19<sup>th</sup> century history, and our "old house" was brought to life again. Sixty-eight Greensburg Elementary second graders were followed by St. Mary's fourth grade students. In July, the YMCA Day Camp and their summer staff toured the Museum. One of these students returned with his parents for their first time visit to the facility. According to that Sunday's volunteer, the young boy was, "...a very enthusiastic tour guide." All the children were especially interested as they viewed Dallas Whipple's exhibit commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The Museum coordinated its opening hours with the First Christian Church's hosting of The Last Supper Quilt traveling exhibit, so visitors could also attend our "Religion in Decatur County" display in the textile room.

A first for the Society was our presentation of a local "Antiques Road House" show. Two appraisers set up shop in the gallery to identify and evaluate a number of Greensburg's family treasures. There were interesting exchanges of information, as those waiting for an appraisal compared notes about their items. The event was made possible by the Alma Taylor Foundation and the Decatur County Visitors and Recreation Bureau. Of the 112 people attending, many were first time visitors to the Museum.

This year's Fourth of July Open House, which followed the annual Children's Parade sponsored by the Tri Kappa Sorority, was an appropriate time for Alex Meyer, a former GCHS and University of Kentucky baseball star, who has signed with the Washington Nationals, to give autographs to Museum visitors. An exhibit of Alex's baseball memorabilia, shared by his family, was on view in a Gallery showcase.

Complimenting Alex's baseball honors, and still on view, are items portraying the 1940's professional women's baseball league, formed by Phillip Wrigley to fill his baseball stadium with fans when the "fellas" marched off to war. A local Burney High School graduate, Janet Rumsey, was a member of the league, and one of her uniforms is on display. The traveling exhibit was arranged by John Pratt, and it will be at the Museum through the summer and early fall. On Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 P.M., a program will be presented in the Gallery to members of present-day girls' baseball teams.



Our fall season at the Museum will continue to be "top notch." September is Archaeology Month, and Ben Morris, "our resident" National Parks Service retired archaeologist, will identify Indian artifacts brought in by interested community members. Also, if you have ever wondered how life was enjoyed, or even endured, before electricity was available in our homes, we'll have an exhibit opening on September 24<sup>th</sup> and lasting through mid-November, which will enlighten you. The exhibit will help you decide if you would have preferred living before technology multitasked your life.

In addition to the Life before Electricity exhibit, a Greensburg Fall Festival date will give us an opportunity to host a pie sale, sponsored by Friends of the Library and HSDC, on September 24<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 a.m.-2: p.m., on the front lawn of the Museum. An Artisan Fair will again be held with a ladies' quilting bee on the front porch along with additional craftsmanship displayed at other locations around the house.

Our second annual Halloween Party for children and adults will be Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Museum's inviting 1840's house will again be transformed into a spooky haunt. Elizabeth Bailey and her committee are planning an afternoon children's party followed by a ghost walk at dusk. An eerie soiree for adults will conclude the frightful festivities.

There's something for everyone at the Museum in the coming months: sports, history and science, archaeology, and fun! Hope to see you there!

- Diana

### **Adult Center and Historical Society Combined Tours**

**-Lois Carol McCormack**

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, our group traveled to Indianapolis and toured the War Memorial and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. After a well-guided visit of the impressive War Memorial, the group went to the Speedway for lunch. The early afternoon hours were spent touring the Speedway Museum and enjoying an interesting bus tour of the Speedway grounds. The only disappointment was not being able to drive around the track because testing was underway.

Our second tour of the season was to Richmond, Indiana, to see the Gaar Museum and the Wayne County Museum. Mr. Gaar made his fortune from the manufacture of steam engines, and the farmhouse museum is intact-furnishings and all-as it was in 1876. Our lunch on this trip was in the old Richmond Depot District, and the Wayne County Museum is in one of the early Quaker meeting houses in the District. The museum is justifiably billed as a miniature Smithsonian.

Both of these trips were planned and conducted by Marilyn Beaver and Charity Mitchell. More trips are planned, so watch for notices posted at our museum and in the Historical Society Bulletin. Our bus tours offer comfortable and convenient ways to visit historic places.

## Teachers' Examinations of the 1890's

(A review of an article by Anna Foley from the Spring, 1985, Bulletin of the Historical Society)

As our Historical Society's members are probably aware, the Indiana State Board of Public Instruction no longer requires a cursive writing component for elementary education. Although your editor was never good in this subject, he did eventually manage to arrange an assortment of straight and curved lines into something that passed as proper penmanship.

No doubt the decision to make learning cursive writing optional for school curricula is a result of technology, and maybe it is a skill no longer needed, but the sheer discipline of learning the "proper way to make letters" requires careful attention to detail that will enhance concentration on other subjects that are studied. Your editor considered this point after reading Ms. Foley's article concerning tests which prospective teachers in the 1890's had to pass before they could receive a teaching license. Ms Foley's article cites a reference in Beers and Company's *Atlas of Decatur County*, which "...tells of a pioneer young lady who applied for a teacher's license," and received it since she was able "...to read a little and write a little."

Assuming the "pioneer young lady" was certified to teach in the 1820's-1840's, Ms. Foley then contrasts the above requirement with the "...rigid ordeals" facing prospective teachers by the end of the century. These "ordeals" took the form of examinations, which featured questions such as the following:

**PHYSIOLOGY:** Describe the organs of the abdominal region and state their function.

Describe the act of breathing and the organs taking part.

**ENGLISH GRAMMAR:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of diagramming sentences?

Correct these sentences giving reasons:

Each of the candidates were given another trial.

I offered to let you and he divide it between you.

Analyze: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." (*Try teaching the import in public schools now.*)

**UNITED STATES HISTORY:**

Relate briefly the causes of the War of 1812, laying stress on the chief cause and name three results of the war favorable to the U.S.

Why did many of the people oppose adoption of the U.S. Constitution?

Name one of the strongest advocates of the Constitution and support your choice

Which was the first state to enter the Union and which was the last?

( N.B. : remember -1890's)

(Continued on page 7)



### ARITHMETIC:

Find G.C.D. of: 324, 486, 1431

When wheat is worth 75 cents a bushel, a baker's loaf weighs 9 ounces.

What should the loaf weigh when wheat is 60 cents a bushel?

How does it affect a ratio to add the same number to both terms? Prove your assertion.

Other subject matter tested included Geography, Science of Education, and Reading. Your editor assumes these questions were asked of all teaching candidates in an attempt to ascertain their grasp of "general knowledge." We need to remember that in the 1890's, much of the U.S. was still an agrarian society. It was also true that many young people went through only eight grades of formal schooling. Education should apply both to the demands of the present and anticipate those of the future. Schools in Decatur County did this in the 1890's and they are doing so today.



Students in front of Adams High School in 1909



High School in Sandusky in 1887



The Old West High School in Greensburg



WESTPORT HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING



### Upcoming Local History Tour

On October 14th, the Decatur County Historical Society will be taking a trip to the residence of Indiana's renowned poet James Whitcomb Riley's in Greenfield. Riley penned famous poems such as "Little Orphan Annie" and "The Raggedy Man." The Riley home was named a National Historic Landmark in 1962.

Lunch will be taken at "The Bread Ladies" in Greenfield, who serve artisan bread and deli-style sandwiches. After dinner the trip will continue to the Huddleston House, an old farmhouse and inn that sits on the Old National Road. The Huddleston House offers a look into what life was like in the Huddleston Household where John and Susannah Huddleston lived and worked along with their eleven children in the mid-1800's. The Huddleston House also features a brand new exhibit concerning the Old National Road.

The trip will end with an hour or two of antiquing in Cambridge City before returning home to Greensburg. The cost of this trip is \$15.00 (doesn't include lunch). Please Call Marylin Beaver at 812-663-8680 for additional details and to sign up for this trip! Sign-ups begin on the 3rd of October.

*The James Whitcomb  
Riley Residence.*



*The Huddleston  
House*

### Remembering Pearl Harbor

Franklin Roosevelt famously said that December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941 was "A date that will live in Infamy." This December will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and we here at the Historical Society of Decatur County want to preserve the memories of that fateful day that changed the course of so many lives. The Historical Society asks you to please write up and send your memories of that day with us, so that we may share them with future generations. We plan to publish a few of these memories in our next bulletin, in honor of Pearl Harbor Day.



*The Pearl Harbor Memorial at  
Oahu, Hawaii*

## Museum Calendar

### September:

**Downstairs Hall:** Archaeology Month Exhibit

**Special Event:** Archaeology Day! Archaeologist Ben Morris will be on hand to identify artifacts and discuss the Native American story in Decatur County and Indiana. September 10th starting at 10 A.M. until 2 P.M.

**Gallery:** All-American Girls Professional Baseball League and Alex Meyer – Decatur County's newest MLB player

**Special Event:** All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Panel, being held September 18th, at 1:30 p.m. here at the museum.

**Upstairs Hall –** Center of Population exhibit, information regarding Decatur County as the Center of Population of the 1890 Census.

**Special Event:** Kick off of our "Life Before Electricity" exhibit on September 24th, come visit the house with interpreters explaining how life was in Decatur County before electricity entered the household.

**Special Event:** We will be selling pies in front of the Museum as part of a fundraiser with "The Friends of the Library" during the Fall Festival, September 24th!

### October:

**Special Event:** Halloween Ghost Walk on October 22nd at the Museum

**Gallery:** Life Before Electricity Exhibit. Come tour the house and experience what life was in Decatur County before electricity entered the household.

**Special Event:** At the Library on October 15th, Mr. Phillip Jackson will be giving a presentation on Gen. Wilder, a Civil War hero and one time Decatur County resident, at 1:00 pm in the library meeting room.

**5th Sunday Musical:** Featuring the Greensburg High School Jazz Band October 30th

### November:

Exhibit on Life before Electricity continues through Thanksgiving

### December:

House will be decorated for Christmas with the them of "Sleigh Bells Ring"

**Gallery:** American Girl Doll Exhibit

**Upstairs Hall:** G.I. Joe Exhibit

**Special Event:** Christmas Open House, December 11th 1-4 p.m.

### Membership Form

Thank you for your support!

Membership rates are as follows:

|            |                   |
|------------|-------------------|
| Student    | \$ 10.00 per year |
| Individual | \$ 15.00 per year |
| Family     | \$ 25.00 per year |
| Patron     | \$ 50.00 per year |
| Historian  | \$100.00 per year |

Circle type of membership at left.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**“The Bulletin”**

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Dustin White

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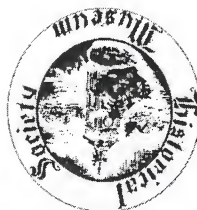
Diana Springmier

**Historical Society of Decatur County Museum**

Museum Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 to 2:00  
Saturday 10:00 to 2:00 and Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 - April  
thru December  
Museum phone/fax: 663-2764  
Email: dechissoc@etczone.net

Or Current Resident

**Society est. 1957  
Museum est. 1984**



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# Historical Society of Decatur County

## The Bulletin

Vol. 16 No. 2

Summer 2011

Greensburg, Indiana

*In Most Cases when  
history repeats itself,  
the price is higher.*

*-Anonymous*



Picture of Calvin Tillison, getting ready for a bicycle ride in the summer of 1887.

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### “Family Treasures Appraisal and Antique Fair”

The Historical Society of Decatur County is excited to announce we will be hosting our first annual “Family Treasures Appraisal and Antique Fair” this summer on Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup>. It’s time to dig through your attic and find that family heirloom and bring it in to be appraised. Thanks in part to grants from the Alma Taylor Foundation as well as Decatur County Visitors and Recreation Commission, Professional Appraiser and Auctioneer Rusty Harmeyer will be at the Historical Society Museum appraising antiques! Outside the museum we will also be hosting an antique show where antique vendors will be set up to sell some of their items. (*Booth space is available for only \$25*) Stop on by to find out if that special item in your attic is worth a fortune, or maybe just buy a new piece for your own antique collection from one of the vendors.

To have an item appraised you must sign up for a time slot by calling us here at the museum 812.663.2764 or emailing us at [dechissoc@etczone.com](mailto:dechissoc@etczone.com). We also request that you give us an idea of what you will be bringing. The object must be small enough to carry into the museum.

*This event is free of charge although a suggested donation of \$10, would help allow us to keep this event going in the future.*

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### Items requested for a future Exhibit:

The Decatur County Historical Society Museum requests your help in procuring these items for our “Life before Electricity” exhibit that will open this fall.

Water Bucket, Tea Kettle,

Boiler,

Pre-1900 toys,

Early Fire Place Utensils,

Pre-1900’s musical instruments

If you have one of these items that you would be willing to loan to us for the exhibit we would greatly appreciate your help.

## Springhill

With a School whose former teachers have achieved renown

Springhill from July 30, 1825 to July 1, 1829 – a period of four years lacking but four days – was known as and called New Zion in honor of the church organization which was effected on July 30, 1825, and on July 1, 1829, the name of the town was changed from New Zion to that of Springhill just the changed being made on account of a post office having been established there at that time and place.

The town of New Zion nor the present town of Springhill never were platted – at least there is no record to be found of that fact, neither does the oldest living resident have any knowledge of the town ever having been platted.

Springhill, located in the extreme northwest corner of Fugit township, is one of the oldest settled portions of that township and is in one of the very best sections of this county, and United Presbyterian church in all Decatur County.

The first settlers in and around the town were: The Brysons, the Hendersons, Hoods, Rankins, Bonners, Pattons, Stewarts, Mitchells, Andersons, Meeks, Fosters and Duncans.

John Bryson built the first house on the town site in 1823, and it was the typical log cabin pioneer variety.

The first store building was erected in 1824 by James Conwell, who operated a general store there-in, and it was also a log construction.

The first post office established in Fugit township was at Springhill in 1829, and John Bryson was the first postmaster. He kept the office in the general store room of James Conwell.

The first grist mill, carding machine, and distillery in the township was located within a stone's throw of Springhill and just east thereof. It was built, owned and operated by William Henderson in the year 1829.

Joseph Henderson, a brother of William Henderson, kept the first tavern in the township, and it was also located within a quarter of a mile and east of the village. This was built in 1830, and he fed and housed over night many a weary traveler.

William Anderson (\*1804-1894) was one of the village merchants in 1829-30.

A blacksmith and wagon shop was operated here in 1840 by Fleming Powell, and it is said he did an immense business.

In later years the business men of Springhill either died or sought new fields in railroad towns, and today there is not a store or salesroom of any description – not even a blacksmith shop.

### Big Celebration

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence was celebrated at Mt. Carmel, near Springhill, on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1826. Judge John Hopkins delivered the address and the celebration was attended by a large crowd, people coming from far and near.

### A Church with a History

The Springhill Presbyterian church was organized July 30, 1825, by Rev. David McBride, D.D., under the jurisdiction of the Associate Reformed church. It assumed the name of United Presbyterian after the union of the Associate and the Associate Reformed churches, which occurred in 1858. It did then and does now adhere to the exclusive use of a metrical version of the Psalms of David, and at that time was opposed to slavery and secret societies.

Among the early founders and members of this church were the Bonners, Meeks, Andersons, Hoods, Mitchells, Pattons, Fosters, Rankins, Stewarts, Duncans and other men of intelligence and enterprise. \*\*Most are buried in Springhill Cemetery

### Pastor for Twenty-two Years

The first pastor of Springhill church was Rev. James Worth, a native of New Jersey, who was a graduate with the very first class from Miami University; studied theology at Allegheny Theological Seminary and was ordained to the ministry at Springhill in June, 1830.

Rev. Worth served this church as pastor for twenty-two years, when he went across the plains with a colony and settled in Oregon, where he was engaged in ministerial work until his death which occurred in July, 1881.

The first Elders were Nathaniel Patton (1810-1888\*), William Hood (1791-1878\*) and Thomas Henry (1828-1901). Nathaniel Patton was the first clerk of the session.

The church site is one among the very finest in the county, and its grand old shade trees around and near the church will long hold in grateful remembrance the name of William Anderson, by whom they were planted and cultivated.

The church membership has been greatly reduced in numbers by emigration and death within the years gone by, but still it has a membership of 140 faithful, consistent and active members.

The present pastor is Rev. Frederick Elliott, and preaching services are held every Sunday morning at 10:30; Sunday school at 9:30 and prayer meeting every Sunday evening at 7 o'clock.

### First Church Building

It was a log one, built in 1826, and nothing more than an ordinary pioneer's log hut with it unhewed logs filled in between with chinken and daubed with nature's clay; puncheon floor; clapboard door and roof; huge fire place; chimney of sticks and clay, a log partially sawed out for a window.

The second church building was erected in 1837, and decidedly more modern and up-to-date plan. It was a neat frame, 43x60 feet, and was the pride of the little band who worshipped therein. It was built by a Clarksburg carpenter by the name of Greenie Curry, who has long since passed to his reward. This building was sold to the Methodist congregation at Laurel in 1891, and was torn down, removed to that town, rebuilt and is today one of Laurel's best church buildings and is being used every Sunday and of week days by the Laurel Methodist congregation in which to hold their religious services.

### Ye Olden Time Schools

The first school building in Springhill was a log one - erected in 1827, and stood one half mile south of where the church now stands; was made out of unhewed logs; cracks between the logs filled with chinken and clay; puncheon floor, mammoth fire place; clapboard roof and a door made of the same material; split saplings underpinned for seats; rough boards for writing desks, goose quills for pens while poke berry juice served as a writing fluid.

The first teacher for this school building was a young Mr. Bryson.

### The Second School Building

It was a frame, erected on the site of the old log structure and was built in the "forties." The first person to teach school in this building was a Mr. Henderson.

### The Third School Building

This was a splendid two-story brick with entrance hall, erected about a quarter mile south of the church, where the present one-story brick now stands, and was built in the year 1859.

The schools taught in this building had some able and eminent instructors, and today, lawyers, doctors, bankers, professional and business men in all walks of life are scattered throughout the country who obtained an early and greater part of their education in the school building at Springhill.



Among the able instructors at one time and another employed in this school we mention: Prof. Stanley Coulter, now of Purdue University, and one of the famous scientists of the world, in the "seventies"; Miss Margaret J. Logan, (1837-1920\*) who taught in 1860, '69, '71 and '73; Rev. William Sawtell in 1862; Judge Marshall Hacker, now residing in Columbus, in 1873; Hon. Robert M. Miller, now a resident of Franklin, 1864 to 1869, and Rev. E. S. Miller in 1871-'72.

The attendance at this school was exceedingly large, pupils being present from quite a distance to take advantage of this most excellent educational institution.

Miss Logan remembers when she and other teachers had as high as forty and some times fifty scholars in one room.

Not only were all the common school branches, but all the higher mathematics, including Latin and Greek, were taught at this academy, and when the scholars were graduated from the High School course of this institution they were ready and prepared to enter college as Freshmen.

The teachers at that time were selected by the township directors, and generally selected as regards salary and in accordance with the amount of school money on hand, but the patrons of Springhill academy placed ability of the instructors above a money consideration, and when the trustees wanted to employ a "forty-a-dollar-per-month-man," the school patrons would "turn him down" by going down deep into their own pockets and raising an additional and sufficient sum to employ a seventy-five dollar per month instructor, and always received results accordingly.

### The Fire Fiend

Fire destroyed this once grand old academy building which will be ever dear to the memory of both teachers and pupils who spent many a happy and profitable day beneath its protecting roof and within its walls, and concerning it many are they who can truthfully sing: "How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood, when fond recollections present them to view."

It was one night in the year 1892, and about the hour when grave yards yawn and ghost stalk the earth, that the fire fiend cast its burning embers in and through this building, and it was soon licked up with the tongues of fiery flames. Just how it caught fire (if it ever "caught") will always remain a profound mystery.

### A Building of Splendor and Magnificence

One among the most splendid and magnificent church buildings in all Decatur county is the United Presbyterian church building located at Springhill, and it stands there with its cloud reaching spire, a monument to the devotedness, unstinted liberality and faithfulness to the cause of the religion its membership espouses. It was erected in 1892.

It is a fine two-story brick building with handsomely dressed stone foundation; slate roof; large cathedral windows; front and side entrance with large and wide stone steps; heated by two furnaces supplied with natural gas; the auditorium is forty-five by fifty feet in the clear; has three Sunday school rooms down stairs together with an ante-room making five rooms on the first floor; there are three Sunday school rooms on the second floor and a large gallery; every room on both first and second floors is handsomely carpeted, and the auditorium is furnished with large easy cushioned seats; in the way musical instrument the church is well supplied, contains a handsome piano and two organs; an attractive clock graces the wall of the lecture room. Its seating capacity, including the lecture room which can be thrown open to the auditorium with its sliding doors is fully six hundred. All in all, it is a church building of rare beauty and a joy to its pastor and congregation. It cost, furnished, sixteen thousand dollars.

### Church Owns Parsonage

The church membership owns a neat and well arranged parsonage containing six rooms and a screened porch, together with seven acres of tillable soil - a farm large enough for the minister to maintain a horse, cow, some porkers and a large garden.

### Neat Cemetery

The church membership also owns a large and well kept cemetery, in which a great number of the former faithful lie to-day. It is a neat burial ground and one that reflects great credit upon both its owners and the sexton in charge.

### Home and Foreign Missions

The good ladies of the Springhill church have a missionary society – Home and Foreign combined – with an active membership of from fifty to sixty, including a branch organization in Greensburg, and they have done and are doing a wonderful work in both home and foreign mission field which has brought forth abundant fruit all along religious lines.

### Springhill School

A good, solid, substantial one room brick school building stands a quarter mile south of the church and in this building Miss Ruth Logan is instructing eighteen scholars in grades one, two, three, four, five and seven, teaching domestic science in addition to the other usual studies in grades seven.

Miss Logan is a splendid teacher and the patrons and pupils are abundantly satisfied with the most excellent manner in which she is conducting the school. Miss Logan is not only well qualified to perform her school duties but possesses a great willingness and demonstrates a desire to do faithfully and well the work assigned her by downright hard labor in the school room with and among all her pupils. Ability coupled with willingness to work, will be crowned with success every time – that's why Miss Logan's school is a success, she possess both the ability and the willingness.

### Prominent Farmers

There are many prominent, influential and well to do farmers residing near Springhill, among whom we mention R. F. Donnell,(1857-1945\*) Bert Meek,(1877-1952\*) Hugh and Thomas Shannon, R. S. Meek,(1840-1922\*) Joseph Fie, Sumner W. Lowe,(1856-1924\*) Adam Meek,(1855-1923\*) Andrew (1838-1926\*) and W. J. Kincaid,(1854-1933\*) Enstace Foley, James Mozier,(1875-1954\*) Frank Bird, Thomas Kelley,(1852-1928\*) Ernest Power,(1871-1945\*) G. G. Kincaid,(1857-1918\*) David Rutherford,(1843-1921\*) Nathan Logan,(1857-1946\*) James Maxwell,( 1870-1949\*)

H. R. McCracken,(1843-1921\*) Chal Robison (1858-1922\*\*) and Jethro Meek.(1852-??\*).

#### **Editor's notes;**

This article first appeared in Oct,1913 *Greensburg Standard*, a weekly newspaper, and

It was edited and added to by : Russell Wilhoit, Decatur County Historian, April 28, 2011.

Notes ,

\*- Springhill cemetery,

\*\* Kingston cemetery

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> in a series of articles about the small communities in Decatur County

Next time we will journey over to Adams Twp., and visit Downeyville , one of the earliest settled areas in this county, by the Shellhorn family . 'Till next time, please take care and I'll see you soon, Russell



*A picture of Springhill Presbyterian Church taken in 2007.*

## *The Memorization Exercise*

I was in the fourth grade at Martinsville, Indiana, in 1940. What would become a second world war was underway in Europe; in Asia conflicts were finally so severe they could no longer be ignored; the United States, just recovering from the Great Depression, was torn between a desire for neutrality and the concern that only through our intercession could the Nazi conquest of Europe be stopped; and my teacher assigned us the task of memorizing a poem. What a confluence of calamities!

Well, I realized that I could handle only one of these daunting problems at a time, so I chose the hardest one of all. I decided to first memorize a poem...and, like war, the shorter the better. Not used to such a difficult task, I asked my mother, a grade school teacher herself, if she could help me find such a poem. She didn't give me the assistance I hoped for; she simply told me to walk the five blocks to the Carnegie Library and find a poem on my own.

I don't remember how I came across the little poem printed below, but when I found it I knew it was for me: it was short, it mentioned drums, and it was patriotic – again a confluence, but this time a happy one!

Perhaps you are familiar with the poem, but if not I have a poser for you. The poem is printed correctly below, but I had to read five copies of the poem off the internet before I found a copy with every word correct. The same mistake, made each time, combines two words into one, which, when read, may sound o.k., but makes no sense. When you read the poem, try to find the error.

**We are approaching a time of patriotic holidays. *The Flag Goes By* sets the proper tone.**

Along the street there comes  
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,  
A flash of color beneath the sky.  
Hats off! The flag is passing by!

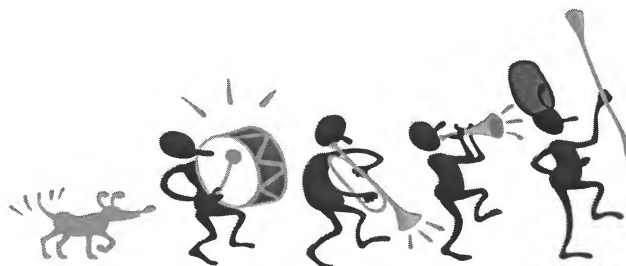
Blue and crimson and white it shines,  
Over the steel-tipped, ordered lines.  
Hats off! The colors before us fly.  
But more than the flag is passing by.

Sea-fights and land-fights, grim and great,  
Fought to make and to save the State.  
Weary marches and sinking ships;  
Cheers of victory on dying lips;

Days of plenty and years of peace;  
March of a strong land's swift increase;  
Equal justice, right and law,  
Stately honor and reverend awe;

Sign of a nation, great and strong.  
To ward her people from foreign wrong.  
Pride and glory and honor - all!  
Live in the colors to stand or fall.

Hats off! Along the street there comes  
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums.  
And loyal hearts are beating high.  
Hats off! The flag is passing by!





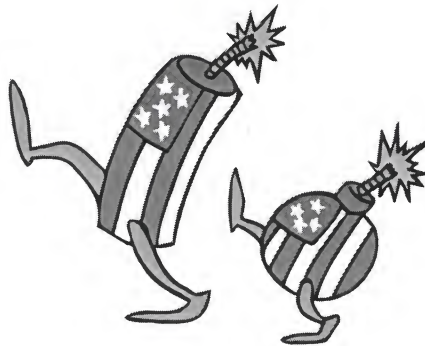
## Fourth of July Fireworks at the Decatur County Fairgrounds

One of Decatur County's most well-attended summer experiences is the annual fireworks display which is sponsored by the Decatur County Parks and Recreation Department and held at the fairgrounds every 3<sup>rd</sup> of July. The event is held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> instead of the 4<sup>th</sup> for two reasons: the 4<sup>th</sup> is reserved as a rain date, and the fireworks display people give us a big break on the price!

Your editor asked Bob Barker, the Parks and Recreation Department superintendent, how many years the fireworks display has been a part of the holiday festivities at the fairgrounds, and he said more than 38 years. The event is probably the most popular one-hour festivity held in Decatur County, and there is no admission price because the cost is entirely funded by voluntary contributions. Additionally, the Greensburg Fire Department and the Decatur County EMS provide units for safety reasons.

Visitors to the event may bring their own refreshments, although members of the Greensburg Kiwanis Club have been in attendance offering a wide selection of food and drinks for all 38 years. A large percentage of the funds raised at the concession stands is returned to the Parks Department to help pay for the fireworks.

This year the fireworks display will be held on Sunday night, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, with blast-off scheduled for about 10:00 P. M., but come early for a good parking place. Bring a hearty appetite as well.



### Haste Makes Waste

As you drive past the Greensburg fire station on North Michigan Avenue at Ireland Street, you will notice that the large rock on the small triangular plot at the intersection is no longer upright. The rock, a monument erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution and displaying a plaque denoting the building of the Michigan Road, was knocked off its foundation by a speeding motorist this past February.

Over many years, this small plot of ground has been faithfully planted with flowers and tended by local garden clubs. Also, the area, officially known as Dryden Park, has been regularly mowed and trimmed by members of the fire department.

Little has been done to repair the monument at this point because of litigation and insurance issues. Members of the Historical Society should monitor the progress of restoration and be ready and willing to render some appropriate assistance to the effort.

The Editor

## The Indianapolis "500"

*By Joe Westhafer*

This year, 2011, marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first official running of the Indianapolis "500" automobile race. Greensburg native, Carl G. Fisher, the creator of the world-famous track, was one of the first to own an automobile in Indianapolis, and he was also one of the first to establish an automobile dealership in the nation.

Because he both sold and raced cars, Fisher became convinced that the quality of American-made automobiles was poor, and that racing these cars was extremely dangerous. The idea of a facility for testing cars in a competitive, yet safe, environment was born.

The race track saw its opening in August, 1909, as basically a testing facility. The original surface consisted of crushed stone and a binder called, at the time, asphaltum, layered on a clay base. This surface was much less expensive than brick or concrete, but the week-end became a disaster when one driver, two mechanics, and a spectator were killed.

Fisher was stunned by the deaths, and even though brick was fifty per-cent more expensive than concrete, over three million bricks weighing ten pounds each were installed that fall, giving the facility its unofficial name, the "Brickyard." This writer's company did extensive work for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and was on site when the original wall was demolished. Although it was replaced with a heavier barrier to restrain NASCAR automobiles, the original wall, although not high enough was, according to the demolition contractor who feared his bid was too low, "... capable of handling anything NASCAR had to offer."

Except for races cancelled during World Wars I and II. The Indy 500 continues to be the single major sporting event attracting the greatest number of spectators with the highest cash pay-out in the world. Additionally, the track is in constant use as a valuable automotive testing facility. Carl Fisher's dream became a reality, and the "Brickyard" has brought world fame to Indianapolis and the state of Indiana.



## Museum Calendar

### June:

**Gallery** - Garden exhibit until the transition to All-American Girls Professional baseball league exhibit.

**Upstairs East Hall** - Centenary of the Indianapolis 500 (*from the collection of Dallas Whipple*)

**Textile Room**— Church Materials, in conjunction with the Religious Handmade Art and Craft exhibit

**June 25<sup>th</sup>** - Family Treasures Appraisal Antique Show

### July:

**4th of July**— House will be decorated for the holiday and open to the public following the local parade.

**Gallery**— All-American Girls Professional Baseball League exhibit highlighting Janet Rumsey, a Decatur county native.

**Upstairs East Hall**— Center of Population exhibit (*120th anniversary*)

**Textile Room**— Textile Exhibit

### August:

**Gallery**— All-American Girls Professional Baseball League exhibit highlighting Janet Rumsey, a Decatur county native.

**Upstairs East Hall**— Center of Population exhibit (*120th anniversary*)

### September-November:

**House and Gallery: Life before Electricity.** Exhibits and programs showing how life changed in homes between 1820 and 1950. Many buildings had electricity in them before the 1940's; however until REMC installed electricity in the countryside, many families in the countryside did not have electricity until the 1940's.

Tree City Fall Festival, 17<sup>th</sup> September. Artisan's Fair at the Museum and on the Square.

**Upstairs East Hallway:** 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first year of the Civil War

**Textile Room:** Life before Electricity and the Textile arts. Daily work in a home connected with textiles

In April the Museum had 95 visitors including a guest from as far a way as Belgium!

We have also enjoyed starting off the month of May giving tours to the 2nd graders of Greensburg Elementary

### Membership Form

Circle type of membership at left.

Thank you for your support!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Membership rates are as follows:

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Lifetime \$500.00 (one-time payment)

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**"The Bulletin"**

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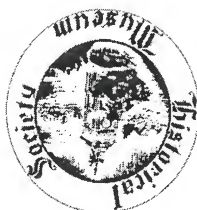
Diana Springmier

**Historical Society of Decatur County Museum**

Museum Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 to 2:00  
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thru December  
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Email: dechissoc@etczone.net  
After hours call 663-2997 or 663-5141

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# Historical Society of Decatur County

## The Bulletin

Vol. 16 No. 4

Winter 2011

Greensburg, Indiana

"The history of every country begins in the hearts of a man or women."

*-Willa Cather in O Pioneers*



The Midwest Fabric Study Group visited the museum in the month of November. The group brought visitors from six different states to the museum.

### Inside this issue:

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### Remembering Pearl Harbor

*Calvin D. Davis*

The approach of the seventieth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brings back strong memories. The preceding Wednesday, December 3, had been my fourteenth birthday. Since that day was a school day, my mother planned a birthday celebration for me on December 7. It was with a certain feeling of triumph that I looked forward to that day. From September 1940 to April 1941 I had to spend much time in Indianapolis taking treatment for a malignancy. Despite my missing half of the eighth grade the Sandcreek school faculty at Letts had promoted me to the freshman year of high school. No longer was I absent from school and schoolwork was going well. After lunch on Sunday, December 7, I settled down to study for a test scheduled next day in Malcolm Clay's English class.

While I read the English literature book my father had the battery-set radio on. Suddenly an announcer interrupted the program to report that unidentified airplanes had bombed Pearl Harbor. A few minutes later we were told that they were Japanese. Throughout the afternoon and evening more information about the attack on the fleet and army installations came from radio newsmen. One report told of Secretary of State Cordell Hull's angry interview with the Japanese ambassador, Kichisaburo Nomura, and Japan's special envoy, Saburo Kurusu. Another report told that President Roosevelt was at his desk dictating a message calling for a declaration of war which he would deliver to Congress the next day.

At school on Monday everyone's attention was on the crisis. Often during the day we could hear airplanes making droning noises as the army moved them to meet a possible attack on the mainland. There was a report that 150 unidentified planes had been sighted off New York. Fortunately this was false. Probably we had that test in English class, but I have no memory of it. When I got home that evening my father told me of a conversation he had had that morning with the man who picked up the milk from our small dairy. "Oh," he said, "our navy will take care of the Japanese in about three weeks." One may smile at this remark from a man who probably did not realize the immensity of the Pacific Ocean and who did not - like most Americans - know how badly the fleet had been damaged. His attitude was not unlike the opinions of many people who should have known better. In its issue of December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Life magazine noted that

(Continued on page 2)

The U.S. Navy has always been supremely confident of its ability to sink the Japanese fleet in open battle or, if the enemy ships refused battle to strangle the island empire by blockade.

Life published pictures of Japanese and American warships. Of particular interest is the photograph of one Japanese aircraft carrier, the Kaya. Life told that the attacking fleet had probably included three carriers which had launched 150 planes to attack Hawaii. "U.S. carrier technique" said Life, was far greater than that of the Kaya. Life mentioned that the U.S. navy had seven carriers, but did not mention that none had been in Pearl Harbor during the attack. At the battle of the Coral Sea on May 7-8 and the battle of Midway June 3-6, planes from American carriers would destroy enemy carriers, inflicting decisive damage on the Japanese navy.

In December no one could anticipate how quickly the fortunes of this country in the Pacific would reverse themselves in April and June 1942. For many days after the Pearl Harbor attack there was a long series of disasters and other grim developments, President Roosevelt limited his message to a recommendation of a declaration of war against Japan and that declaration was ready for his signature a few hours after he addressed Congress. On December 11<sup>th</sup> Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. In the meantime Japanese planes destroyed many American planes on the ground near Manila in the Philippines; and, on the tenth, sank the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, two of the British navy's finest ships, in the South China Sea. That same day the Japanese army began landing in the Philippines.

Many people born since the Pearl Harbor attack think of it as having begun the Second World War. They must be reminded that while it began the period of full American participation it was an important incident in much longer struggles, one beginning in Manchuria in 1931 and another which began in Europe during the mid-1930's. Members of the freshman high school class of 1941-1942 were too young to remember the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1931 and 1932 and it is unlikely any of them remembered two events which took place in 1933, a few months before they entered first grade in September - Hitler's appointment as German chancellor on January 30 and the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president of the United States on March 4. Many of us were soon aware of other major events. I remember how my father and I read the Greensburg Daily News and the Indianapolis Star together every evening. I was intrigued by pictures from Ethiopia where the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, was taking over the country. I have no memory of one of the pivotal events of the 1930's - Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, but I remember the Spanish Civil War during which Francisco Franco, assisted by German and Italian troops destroyed the Spanish Republic and established a totalitarian regime headed by himself, and the beginning in 1937 of Japan's attempt to conquer all China. Before Pearl Harbor I was reading Ernest Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls, a novel about the Spanish Civil War, and Pearl Buck's novels about China. When Hitler in March 1938 annexed Austria most of the students who would enter high school in the fall of 1941 recognized that Nazi Germany under Hitler's leadership had become an extremely dangerous threat to peace. Hitler hardly waited to complete annexation of Austria before demanding cession of the Sudetenland by Czechoslovakia. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain and Premier Edouard Daladier of France, at Munich on September 29 let him have what he wanted, but Hitler was insatiable. He encouraged the Slovaks to secede from their union with the Czechs and set up their own state under his control. In March 1939 he made the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia protectorates with himself as protector, and he began pressing Poland for large sections of the country. In 1938 and 1939 the Sandcreek freshman class of 1941 was in the sixth grade taught by Earl Rawlins. Mr. Rawlins departed from the usual order when teaching geography. He had us turn first to those sections concerning the countries taken over by Hitler and Mussolini or the Japanese. Doing so made long-lasting impressions.



On August 23, 1939, my aunt and I were driving towards the family farm when, for the first time, I heard an announcer interrupt a radio report. He told that Germany and the Soviet Union had just signed a non-aggression pact. While the announcer could tell us nothing about the other agreements concluded by the two countries that day, we knew that this meant the Soviet Union would not interfere if Germany invaded Poland. Hitler on September 1 sent his armies across the Polish border. I was in Sunday school at the Westport Christian Church on September 3, 1939, when the superintendent, Homer Williams, rose to tell us that he had just learned that Britain and France had declared war on Germany. Two days later - on Tuesday after Labor Day - the future freshman class fall 1941 entered the seventh grade. The wars against Japan and Germany raged throughout their junior high and high school years. When the Sandcreek High School class of 1945 graduated on April 19 - one week after the death of President Roosevelt - the war was nearing its end. On May 8 the German surrender was announced. By that time the youngsters who had been first graders in 1933, seventh graders in 1939, high school freshmen in 1941, and high school graduates in 1945 had scattered. Some got jobs on farms, others in factories. A few went into the army at once. A few went to college. I was one of those who went to college, enrolling at Franklin College as a freshman on September 2, 1945. On that day at a ceremony on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay the representatives of the imperial government of Japan signed their country's surrender.

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### World War II Recollections: Lois Carol McCormack

As an assignment for a U.S. History class at South Decatur High School in her junior year, Kristen Crabill Huntman interviewed Lois Carol McCormack. Here are Kristen's questions and Lois Carol's responses.

**Q.** Where were you living before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and how informed were you about the war? Was your family prepared for a war?

**A.** I was a freshman at Greensburg High School when the U.S. became involved. I lived two miles from town with my parents, my younger brother, and one of my grandparents. The war lasted the four years of my high school career. We had a huge garden, raised chickens, turkeys, and rabbits for meat. My father rode in a car pool to work at Allison's in Indianapolis. I was made very aware of the German aggression in Europe by a marvelous 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher who kept a huge map of Europe on the wall, and as Hitler overran another country, she colored that area in black. Because my mother had a cousin serving as a missionary in Czechoslovakia, we were very aware of conditions in Europe. I do not recall that my family desired the war, but because my father had served in WW I, he was of the opinion we should put a stop to Hitler.

**Q.** What do you remember about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

**A.** On December 7, 1941-a Sunday afternoon-my brother, an older cousin, and I were "shooting baskets." My parents heard about Pearl Harbor on the radio, and when we went in later, we were told. The news didn't really make a big impact. The next day at school we were made much more aware of the situation. Ironically the cousin who was with us on Sunday was killed in the battle of Saipan. At that time I don't think we hated the Japanese, but we felt such indignation at being attacked. We had already been taught patriotism-the war only intensified it.

**Q.** What do you remember as a young person on the "Home Front" about the war effort?

**A.** Students saved newspapers, tin cans, bought war savings stamps; we did P.E. five days a week; everyone saved scrap iron and grease. We knitted squares for afghan scarves, wrote letters, baked cookies (without sugar), and met the troop trains as they often made stops in Greensburg. Everyone endured rationing: gasoline, meat, sugar, shoes. I don't recall being afraid, but we were taught to be cautious about spies. Our information came from radio, newspapers, and the newsreels shown in the theaters.

(Continued on page 4)

Probably the most subtle information, which we never questioned, came from propaganda posters and movies -especially morale- boosting cartoons.

Q. How did people feel about President Roosevelt?

A. People were very opinionated about Roosevelt-very favorable or unfavorable. This did not seem to affect our attitude toward winning the war. It had to be done.

Q. What about the end of the war? Did President Truman make the right decision to use the atomic bomb?

A. We were totally unaware of the decisions Mr. Truman faced. I remember great relief; if this would end the war, fine. Four years are forever between 14-18.

Q. When did you learn about the Holocaust, and what did you think about it?

A. Again, we weren't all that aware of Hitler's atrocities until sometime after the war. Then the horrors were more than we could grasp. It takes years to accept that something so terrible could occur.

Q. Do you think patriotism was more evident during WW II than it is now?

A. If you listened to WW I veterans and read the Home Front stories of that war, you might think our patriotism peaked in 1917-18. World War II was more of a job. "They" started it; we had to finish it.

Q. Did the Allied powers make "deals" at Yalta and Potsdam? If so, what were they?

A. Possibly. I don't really know. Read *Churchill- Roosevelt-Stalin* for insight.

Q. What about WW II most affected you?

A. The deaths of my two cousins...who were very close to me. As I mentioned, one was killed during the battle for Saipan. The second was killed two days after the Japanese surrender, but the politicians chose to delay the news of the end of the war. He was a radio operator on a B-25 and was killed on a return flight over Korea.

Q. What seemed to be the most frustrating about the war?

A. That it took control of every American's life. And furthermore, that we accepted the necessity of the situation.

Q. Do you believe that Americans can distance themselves from events in other parts of the world?

A. No-we aren't, and can't be, isolated anymore. Instant communication, T.V., etc. has made isolation impossible. Because of T.V. we can know the immediate horrors of war.

Q. One final thought: you said that the war took total control of your life. Does this mean that nothing else mattered, was of consequence to America?

A. No...of course not. Families were close; life was still interesting. We still found time to have fun-it was just different. The family went to the movies, often two or three times a week. Our high school had a "school night" every Tuesday evening from 6:30-9:00. Instructors taught first-aid, musical groups practiced, the school newspaper staff worked, and the boys (no girls) were allowed to build model planes to be used for identification in case of an air raid. However, we never put up black-out curtains and we didn't have air-raid drills. But we did have an air-raid siren on the shorter tower of the courthouse. We still use it...it is now the tornado siren at the fire station. It helps some of us remember....



## First Phone Used Here

Nov. 1, 1878

First in County at St. Omer

Three Months Previous

Called Agaphone

Local Exchange Started 26 Years

Ago Now Has 2,500 Subscribers

Reprinted from Greensburg Daily News, March 11,1926,

( author unknown)

In connection with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the invention of the telephone, attention has been called to the first use of the telephone in Greensburg and Decatur county.

As has been stated before, the first use of the telephone in Decatur county was by Israel D. Jewett ( 1842-1919\*) at St. Omer in the summer of 1878. He built a line to St. Paul and claimed to have a phone which he called the "agaphone" that was better than the telephone. In September, 1878, a staff correspondent of the Cincinnati Gazette made long articles in that paper in which he said the "agaphone" was a "perfect triumph" over the Bell phone. Mr. Jewett attempted to get a patent on his phone, but it was said Bell headed him off. This line was the beginning of what became the Jewett exchange at St. Paul which is still in operation.

The first line built in Greensburg was constructed in October, 1878, by Richard Russell, father of John F. Russell of this city, who was for years employed by the Big Four railway. He built a line for Henry C. Stockman, (1834-1905\*\*) county treasurer, connecting that office with the Stockman grain elevator near where the water tower is today) six blocks away. This line, opened Nov. 1, 1878, was the first in Greensburg and hundreds of people got a thrill by hearing "hello" come over the wire.

About 1881 Ed L. Luther started the first exchange in the back rooms on the second floor of the Citizens Bank building, the rooms now occupied by Dr. G. K. Lucas in the Daily News building. In 1883 a Mr. Johnson came here from Shelbyville and bought Luther out, who went to Topeka, Kans. IN 1885 A. P. Bone (1836-1907\*\*) of Shelbyville bought Johnson out and about 1895 took Brutus Hamilton (1847-1903\*\*) in as a partner, and they sold in 1905 to the Bell company.

In 1900 the Decatur County Independent Telephone Co. started and has had the local field exclusively since about fifteen years ago when the Bell company relinquished the local field. The present exchange has about 2500 call boxes and property valued at nearly a quarter million dollars.

\*Editors note, this was first printed in March 11,1926, Greensburg Daily News, and it was edited and added to by Russell Wilhoit, Decatur County Historian, Nov.15,2011.

Notes.

\*-buried in Star Baptist Cemetery, Adams Twp

\*\*-buried in South Park cemetery

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> in series of articles that I have found over the years while doing research that I think you will enjoy. They are about a wide range of topics that are very interesting. If you have would like to see certain articles about any Decatur County subject, please let me know and I will check and see if I have one or I will try and find one to reprint here; 'till next time, take care, Russell



## Downeyville

Nov.15,1913

One hundred years ago - in 1813 - the little hamlet now known as Downeyville was called "Pickayune Mills", and during that year a large grist mill, run by water power, was erected on the creek in Downeyville, by John Shelhorn, grandfather of Lafe and John Shelhorn, who are now nearby residents of the little village.

In 1815 a saw mill was added to the grist mill, and from these mills, Mr. Shelhorn supplied the people for many miles with their bread-stuffs and lumber.

In later years Mr. Shelhorn sold the mills to Peter Sherman,(\*died 1872,age 84 yrs) grandfather of Henry R. Sherman, and he sold to Isaac White,(1822-1905\*) father of J. Wesley (1851-1930\*) Charles and Edward White, and from Mr. White's ownership the mills passed into the hands of Charles Flinn, who sold the property to Daniel H. Banta. Mr. Banta then sold to Joshua Kelly, who operated the mills until they became so run down and worthless as to be wholly abandoned and never to be rebuilt.

For years and years the old Pickayune Mills were a God-send and a blessing to many, many people.

And it was John Shelhorn, original owner of the mills, that erected the first house in Downeyville - then Pickayune Mills - and the old building not only still stands here in Downeyville, but is the home of Henry Harmon and mother.

The town was known as Pickayune Mills up until the 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1876, when George W. Stotsenburg (1829-1892\*) christened it Downeyville in honor of Amos F. Downey, (1844-1919\* also a Civil War Veteran) and by that name it has ever since been known. The town was platted in 1868.

It was the 13<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1876, that Amos F. Downey was commissioned postmaster of Downeyville, took his oath of office and executed his bond as required by law, and continued as postmaster for the term of twenty-six long years - until the postoffice at that place was abolished by the Government.

Mr. Downey exhibited to the News scribe his commissions bearing date as above, and signed by Marshall Jewell, Postmaster General.

### Postmaster's Salary

Mr. Downey's salary as postmaster was sixty per cent of all the postage stamps he cancelled in his office, the remaining 40% of the cancellation money going to the mail carrier. It is needless to remark that neither Postmaster Downey nor the mail carrier got rich from stamp cancellations.

During twenty years of the time Mr. Downey was postmaster he operated a blacksmith shop, and during the whole of the twenty-six years as postmaster, he managed a general store.

Mr. Downey retired from active business a few years ago, selling his general store to his son, John,(1870-1923\*) who still owns and operates it, and is enjoying a real good business.

## Magnificent Church

Downeyville has not only a splendid but a magnificent church building, built of brick, and was erected in 1870, remodeled in 1907, having an addition, a belfry, etc., built to it. The church completed as it is, cost between five and six thousand dollars.

Rev. Curtis Benson is the very efficient pastor, and preaches to large congregations every other Sunday.

Downeyville has no schools, the pupils being conveyed via hack line to Adams.

The people of the town have an abundant supply of natural gas, an ever-flowing spring of pure water and - live in peace and enjoy life.

\*\*\* Editor's notes, Reprinted from Greensburg Standard , Nov,1913,author unknown

Edited and added to by Russell Wilhoit, Decatur County Historian, Nov,15,2011

\*\*notes

\*buried in Star Baptist Cemetery just down the road from Downeyville

This is the 16<sup>th</sup> in a series of articles about the small communities in Decatur County

Next time we will journey over to Salt Creek twp and visit the little town of New Pennington, established in 1851, hoping for the railroad to pass near there, 'Till next time, please take care and I will see you soon, Russell

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## Museum Musings

*Diana Springmier*

The Museum's "Life Before Electricity" exhibit opened during the annual D.C. Fall Festival with the exhibit inside the museum and quilters and woodcarvers demonstrating on the porches. Under a tent on the lawn were numerous pies for sale, baked by Society ladies and Friends of the Library.

In early October, the museum became a destination for a couple of touring groups. From Cincinnati, a Joys of Travel tour bus pulled up in the 300 block of N. Franklin on a warm fall morning; fifty-six enthusiastic tourists from Ohio and Kentucky visited.

Thirty Indiana State Museum docents had placed the HSDC Museum on their itinerary during a tour of the area. It is gratifying that our small town museum is an attraction. Two hundred thirty-one people visited in October. The second annual children's Halloween Party saw many little goblins and their parents viewing Little Red Riding Hood, a.k.a. GCHS student Katie Swinford, peering suspiciously at grandmother, a transformed Dustin White, society director, his menacing wolf's head peering out of the covers on the four poster bed in the master bedroom. Palm reading by Marilyn Millis, face painting, reading of Riley poems by the good witch Sally Robbins, and a cookie walk were offered. Cobwebs and cockroaches took center stage as well as Dr. Jerman's Civil War surgeons' saw which had cut in half a poor soul on the upstairs hall display cabinet - a memorable afternoon for spooks and parents.



A November Sunday afternoon, usually too quiet at the museum, was delightfully interrupted when a train from Cincinnati chugged into town. Seventy travelers from Cincinnati, West Chester, and Columbus, Ohio, registered at the door and were pleasantly surprised at the museum's offerings. The Laskowskis, Lois Carol McCormack, and Director Dustin all volunteering, kept on the move.

Meetings at the museum this fall were held by D.C. Women's Educators, twenty four members heard an eye opening program by Betsy Moll, again recently returned from Budapest, Hungary. She as a former music theory student, had been the first student visa behind the iron curtain after the second world war. The AOA sorority chapter had an evening tour and meeting as well.

The last fall group was the Midwest Fabric Study Group who had registered to see all of the collection's quilts and coverlets., Which covered the tops of every available display case and piece of furniture. One wonders how the staff, the majority volunteers, keep up with this schedule. They do it very well! Presently, volunteering cleaning ladies, society members, are polishing every corner for the Christmas season.

Greensburg Elementary school 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes are making ornaments for the tree and will be visiting the "Sleigh Bells Ring" exhibit, pulled together by Ginny Garvey and Marilyn Beaver. The annual Christmas Open House is Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Special Christmas music arranged by Carolyn Cleland, Santa & Mrs. Claus, the red L.S. Ayres mailbox on the porch to receive Santa's letters, and Gladys Pike's famous bread pudding with warm butter sauce will be waiting for you as well as a dining room table laden with holiday treats. You might want to bring your camera to take family pictures on the 19<sup>th</sup> century sleigh on the front lawn. Hope to see you soon.



Ben Morris identifying objects at the museum's archaeology day event on September 10th.



Former AllAmerican Girl Professional Baseball League players and umpire, at our AAGPBL panel on September 18th.



Sally Robbins the "Good Witch" reading stories to children for Halloween



Items on display at the museum's  
"Life before Electric" event



## Museum Calendar

### December:

House will be decorated for Christmas with the them of "Sleigh Bells Ring"

**Gallery:** American Girl Doll Exhibit

**Upstairs Hall:** Decatur County's Brevet Brigadier Generals

**Textile Room:** G.I. Joe toys

**Special Event:** Christmas Open House, December 11th 1-4 p.m.

**Special Event:** Christmas Walk, December 2nd

### January:

**Gallery:** American Girl Doll Exhibit

**Upstairs Hall:** Decatur County's Brevet Brigadier Generals

**Textile Room:** G.I. Joe toys

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## Dryden Park Update

Your editor recently talked to Fire Chief Scott Chastain about the status of Dryden Park and the monument dedicated to the opening of the Michigan Road. If you recall, the little park occupies a site on a triangular plot of ground just across from the Greensburg, Washington Township, fire station. Unfortunately, the park fell victim to an uninsured speeding motorist last winter. Quite a bit of damage was done to the monument and, because of litigation, several months passed with seemingly little effort being made to restore the site. Well, this is, happily, not the case. A committee made up of Chief Chastain, Brian Robbins, Greg and Judy Rust, County Highway Superintendent Mark Klosterkemper, et al, with a donation from the local Rotary Club, received a grant to restore the monument and the site. The huge stone has been placed back on its base, and the plaque memorializing the Michigan Road's historical significance has been cleaned and refastened to the stone. The Historical Society expresses its thanks to those who undertook this important task.

### Membership Form

Thank you for your support!

Membership rates are as follows:

Student	\$ 10.00 per year
Individual	\$ 15.00 per year
Family	\$ 25.00 per year
Patron	\$ 50.00 per year
Historian	\$100.00 per year

Circle type of membership at left.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Society's Agent**

William H. Robbins

**Museum Director**

Diana Springmier

**Historical Society of Decatur County Museum**

Museum Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 to 2:00  
Saturday 10:00 to 2:00 and Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 - April  
thru December  
Museum phone/fax: 663-2764  
Email: dechissoc@etczone.net

**"The Bulletin"**

Don't miss our  
Christmas Open House  
December 11th, 1-4

**Society est. 1957  
Museum est. 1984**

